(Washington, DC)— The U.S. House of Representatives today passed the Energy and Water Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2010, which contains a $500,000 provision secured by Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.) that will allow the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to use new cutting-edge nanotechnologies recently invented at UWM in the development of new types of solar cells that could be produced at a fraction of the cost of today's solar cells and be at least as efficient or even more efficient.

"Energy prices keep rising and falling because of foreign oil suppliers, supply and demand, and many other factors that are out of the people's control – but we have to keep paying," Congresswoman Moore said. "But the energy from the sun is abundant, and as far as I know, it's not burning out any time soon. It's just common sense that we study the potential of the sun to help us power our cars and heat our homes, for example.

"Plus, the development of solar technology at UWM has an added benefit for our local manufacturing sector. These funds will help transfer new solar technologies to area industries and train Wisconsin's metal manufacturers that are facing hard times because of competition from other countries."

There are already methods to create lightweight materials with the characteristics necessary to be used for high-efficiency solar cells. The funds secured by Congresswoman Moore would specifically address the challenge of developing a cost-effective way to mass-produce these materials, and to train the metals manufacturing and foundry communities on how to incorporate them into their existing processing lines.

"The College of Engineering and Applied Science at UWM is very excited to receive funding to extend our research efforts on high-efficiency solar cells," said Michael Lovell, Dean of the College of Engineering and Applied Science at UWM. "If solar energy is to become a practical energy source, we must have more efficient ways to convert photons into electricity, fuel and heat. This funding will greatly enhance our ability to create novel nanostructured materials that conquer the tremendous challenges of large-scale commercialization of inexpensive, high output solar cells."

UWM estimates that this project will create about 200 new jobs in Wisconsin, as well as revitalize the foundry and molding industries in Wisconsin and other states.

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